

**Title Goes Here**  
**by**  
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You know that feeling you get when you fall in love? Really, the best part of life is feeling that feeling. Man that's great; it really is. It's the best.

Okay, do you have that instilled in your mind? Great, then we can begin. First off, to any of you with that feeling in your lives, I hate you. Second, Laura did not give me that feeling, which is one of the reasons why I was breaking up with her.

“YOU'RE BREAKING UP WITH ME?!” Laura screamed; people stared, and I suddenly wished I were deaf and invisible, at least for the next five minutes. We were sitting outside of the coffee shop she worked at.

“Well, kinda...” I paused. Now I know what you're thinking; you're thinking that if someone asks me if I'm breaking up with them, that the phrase ‘well, kinda...’ isn't exactly the right thing to say. But now let me tell you what *I'm* thinking. I'm thinking that it's the perfect start to the most kickass breakup speech you've ever heard in your life. A breakup speech so sensitive that you'd think the guy that wrote *The Notebook* came up with it. But he didn't, I did, and it was all mine. There was just one problem. I was kinda high, and I kinda forgot just what that speech was.

Laura had a distinct look of frustration on her face; the kind of frustration you see on a mom with three screaming children at the back of the line for a Disneyland ride.

“Well...?” She demanded. I looked at her; I knew I had to say something that could let us both walk away from here with our dignity.

I fought every urge to say “let’s just be friends,” which by the way is the worst thing that can be said in a situation like this. I believe this from the bottom of my heart, but for some reason it was the only thing I could think about saying. So I didn’t think. Instead, I just spoke the first words that came out of my mouth.

“It’s not you, it’s me…” and I immediately regretted saying it. Laura said nothing; she just rolled her eyes, got out of her chair, and walked away. The weather outside the coffee shop was so nice that the place was as packed as ever, and quite a few people witnessed what just happened. In retrospect, the coffee shop might not have been the best place for a breakup, I mean if I wanted privacy or anything. I guess I didn’t feel too awkward though because I kinda just sat there right outside the coffee shop just to think about everything.

I felt bad, but Laura and I never would’ve lasted anyways. She’s the cutest Barista at the local coffee shop, and we caught each other’s eye immediately. She wrote her phone number on the cup she made my drink in and I called her up on account of how cute she was. Unfortunately, she’s also crazy. Laura believes in love at first sight, but not the romantic kind. She believes in the kind of love at first sight where it should really be called love without actually knowing anything about the person you think you love. By day three of our relationship, Laura was already talking about marriage. She was also calling my cell phone every fifteen minutes, and once when I had a four-hour shift at work, she left about a thousand voicemail messages accusing me of cheating on her and avoiding her. Which I wasn’t, I was just at work.

Truthfully, I hadn't dated a girl that wasn't crazy since me and Ashley broke up about ten months back. I remember it like it was yesterday:

"You," I was talking as fast as I could, trying to get the words out in between Ashley's passionate kisses, "are so pretty," I barely got the sentence out before the rest of my words were muffled by her mouth over mine. It was great. It was romantic. We were in love.

Two weeks later we hated each other's guts. We haven't spoken since.

Lucky for me I didn't have time to think about how messed up my love life might be, because it was around 9:00PM and in about one hour my friend Andrew was going to get jumped.

Andrew's a prick. He's 17, he's rich, and he's conceited. He's also my responsibility for the time being. His older brother, Tyler, is a drummer, and I used to play in a band with him. Andrew would hang around all the time and listen to us practice. Tyler and I are both 19, and when Tyler went off to the army he told me to look after Andrew. Now it seemed like Andrew was making more and more enemies every day. Great.

There were six guys that were planning on jumping Andrew, but the one that wanted it the most was Corey Getz. He was planning the whole thing. I knew all six of those guys, and hell, I knew I could beat out any one of them in a fight but the six of them together would've murdered Andrew and me. This was all supposed to go down at Mia's, who was throwing the biggest party of the year tonight. That's why I had to get a

team together, and I had the perfect team in mind: Danny, Matt, Steven, and Ohio. Wait, Ohio? Shit.

I ran back to the car because I forgot Ohio had been waiting in the passenger seat this whole time. Ohio is a good kid, he moved here from Dayton, Ohio. His real name is Timothy but he hates that name. That's why everyone in Dayton called him by his middle name, Jordan. Here in California everyone just started calling him Ohio, and it stuck. He's adopted the name ever since.

"Sorry that took so long." I hopped in the driver's seat. We should have picked everyone up and been at the party by now. "Did you get bored?"

"Nah, it's okay, I'm high anyways." We smoked before I got to the coffee shop, both so I wouldn't get nervous about the breakup and so Ohio wouldn't be bored while he was waiting in the car. Looks like it worked out perfectly. "How'd it go anyways?"

"Could've went better, but what breakup has ever gone well?"

"Good point." Ohio nodded the kind of deep thought nod that high people do when someone asks them a rhetorical question. At first glance, Ohio looks harmless. Something about a tall, skinny, sixteen year old kid doesn't seem threatening, but I knew better. Ohio's hometown, Dayton, was one of the biggest drug towns in the country. Most people think of the state of Ohio as boring and uneventful, but Dayton is the complete opposite. In fact, its crime rates are way worse than the national average. The truth is that just getting by in Dayton has forced Ohio to teach himself how to fight, and he's really good at it, too.

I started the car and drove out to pick everyone up. Now, you might be thinking it isn't safe to drive high, but don't worry. Let me educate any of those notions very

quickly. Scientific studies have proven that smoking cannabis will not affect one's driving. While it does affect those that smoke it, it does not affect their reaction time anywhere near enough to cause someone to mistakenly hit a car, person, light pole, whatever. However, drinking alcohol or taking most major over the counter cold medications while driving is extremely dangerous. That's why I never drive when I'm drunk or sick.

The drive was kind of nice; it was one of those cool nights that made everyone sort of comfortable and happy. Hardcore metal guitars blared out of my stereo so loud you'd think that someone was setting fireworks off in my car. Ohio must have sneaked the CD into my player somewhere between Parker Street and West Avenue. He loves that hardcore metal stuff.

We drove up to Bessler Park to pick up Matt. About two months ago, Matt's dad and step mom kicked him out of the house, and he's been living in his car ever since. He usually parked at Bessler to sleep. We pulled up just as he was lighting a cigarette. Matt walked up to us.

"Mind if I smoke in your car?"

I shrugged. "Why not?" We were late enough as it is, and I didn't really feel like waiting around for him to finish his cigarette.

Matt was six feet tall and constantly angry; they say living out of a car will do that to a person. I've seen him punch holes in walls, punch dents in mailboxes, and punch teeth out of people. I wasn't really sure if he could fight, but I knew he could punch.

We pulled up outside of Steven's house, but all he did was say, "I'll be right out." It took him damn near ten minutes to come out to the car. He always took almost ten minutes when we didn't have a lot of time.

"Man so uh, sorry I took so long but I've been drinkin' a lot in my room, and I was getting dressed right," Steven jumped in the backseat, "and then I remembered we were supposed to get in a fight tonight, and I was like man, I don't want to get blood all over my good clothes, so I had to change again. You understand." I looked back at Steven. The guy had on a pair of jeans and a sweatshirt his ex-girlfriend had given him. Perfect fighting clothes I guess.

"Sure, I can understand that."

Steven's the biggest out of all of us. He gets a little crazy when he gets bored, and he usually gets bored at parties like this. He's six-foot-five and most people who know him prefer to avoid fighting him.

We pulled up outside of Danny's house, he was carrying something when he opened the car door and jumped in.

"Thanks for driving," Danny expressed his thanks and held up a bottle of whiskey. "I really want to drink this tonight. I'll drive next time though." He stuffed the bottle in his sweatshirt and threw his seatbelt on.

If Corey and his friends wanted to jump Andrew, they'd have to get through us first. Now that we had everyone, we drove out to Mia's.

We pulled into Mia's development too little too late. The party had already been going on for about an hour and it seemed like every single possible place to park had already been taken, everything except for a space about two blocks away. Ohio shuffled

through my CD's for about the millionth time before I finally accepted the parking space as the nearest one. Steven was the first out of the car and he started walking to the party because someone in there had a bottle of brandy he paid for earlier. I hated having to park far away from a party; not because of the long walk, but because I didn't like taking my breakable glass bong into a party. That's why we usually just came out to my car to smoke. I figured since it was such a long distance that we ought to just smoke now instead of having to come back out here later.

"You guys wanna smoke before we go in?" I might as well have asked them if they felt like breathing; these guys were always down to smoke. Everyone except Matt that is. Matt stopped smoking weed when he started living in his car.

"Sure," Danny nodded so his words would have some visual effect, "hold on a second though." Danny took a shot of whiskey and shook off the taste. "Ok let's smoke."

I looked over at Ohio. "You wanna smoke?"

"Yeah," Ohio grinned like a five year old with a Happy Meal. He's the only guy I know that I've seen more high than sober.

"I'm fine," Matt put his hands up to motion that he didn't want to smoke. "I'm gonna go ahead to the party and get something to drink," Matt lit up a cigarette to help him get through the long journey to the house, "I'll see you guys in there."

Matt was already out of sight by the time we lit up the bong. It had already been passed around a good three times before it was done. Ohio had the unfortunate luck to figure it out.

“It’s cashed.” Ohio blew out a stream of smoke that obviously wasn’t weed anymore. It was all ash. I sucked the ash down and dumped out the bong water when Danny noticed something.

“Dude someone’s coming.” Danny pointed up the street and we saw two figures running towards us from Mia’s house.

“Do you think it’s some of Corey’s friends coming to fight us?” Ohio asked the question we were all thinking.

“Dunno...” I trailed off, suddenly becoming intent on figuring out who was running this way. I breathed a sigh of relief when I finally could see who it was. “It’s Chris and JD.” I remembered hearing that Chris and JD were doing Ecstasy for the first time tonight. I’m against it because it’s so bad for the mind and body, but it makes you incredibly energetic, hence the fact that they were running. The two of them got to us surprisingly quick.

“Hey guys, hey, guys...hey,” JD was trying to say something but he kept losing his train of thought. His pupils were huge. So were Chris’s.

“Dude, are you guys thizzin?” Ohio asked; he must’ve seen their pupils too. JD was all too happy to answer.

“Yeah dude! Hell yeah, man, everything feels so good right now-you don’t even know,” JD was speaking with emphasis on every word with a grin the size of Saturn on his face.

“Really?” Danny’s tone was polluted with curiosity, but he was also numb out of his mind at this point. He kept taking swigs of his whiskey.



“Yeah man! YEAH! You’ve gotta try this Danny; it’s like I can feel music an-”

JD was cut off by Chris.

“Wait!” Chris threw his hands out to show us how serious he was. “Everyone stop talking.” We stood there in silence for a few seconds before Chris could gather his thoughts. You could tell he was trying hard, but he was very distracted by the Ecstasy.

“We came out here for a reason...” Chris scratched his head, then his eyes widened. “I remember!”

“What...what is it?” Ohio had a patient tone, but you could tell he was starting to get annoyed.

Chris looked up. “Andrew sent us out here, he told us Corey’s here right now and that he came here with eight people, not six, and he said to get in there right away.”

*Shit*, I thought to myself, then I figured what the hell I might as well speak my mind. “Shit.” I looked at Chris and JD. “We’re a little outnumbered here; do you guys feel like fighting tonight?”

JD jumped up. “Hell yeah man, dude we’ve got so much energy right now you don’t even know.”

We started walking towards the party but we might as well have been running we were going so fast. I played basketball with Chris all the time and once these guys came to the court we were playing at and tried to mug us. We came out with flying fists and all our cash, so I knew Chris could fight. I’d seen JD wrestle before, and on the ground no one can get the advantage on him.

“Thanks, I’m glad you guys are looking out for us,” I nodded toward Chris and JD.

“For sure,” JD still had that grin on his face. “I always have your back. You’re like my brothers, I love you guys,” JD paused, “but right now I love everything. Ex is great.”

Mia’s family is rich. I mean really rich. If I told you her house was really big, that would be an understatement. Her house is a freakin’ castle. We could hear the music long before we got to her place. JD and Chris fought every urge not to break away and start dancing with all the nearby girls; I’ve heard Ecstasy will make you want to do that, like, more than anything. The door was wide open, and we could see the violent flash of a strobe light inside. The place was packed and we could barely get through. We ran in to find Matt punching the sides of the doorway into the kitchen.

“Matt, what the hell are you doing?!” I ran over to Matt. “Didn’t you see Corey come in? Where’s Andrew?” Matt didn’t say anything. He just kept punching the walls around this doorway. “Matt are you alright?”

“Oh him?” A guy that was lying on a couch by the kitchen suddenly sat up like he was being raised from the dead. He seemed pretty drunk. “That guy took a stamp of acid like the moment he walked in.”

“What?!” That was the last thing I wanted to hear. He might as well have told me Laura was pregnant.

“Yeah, he started freaking out and talking about how this doorway was a mouth covered with teeth and blood and guts and stuff,” the guy on the couch took a sip of his drink, “and every time someone walked through the doorway he kept yelling that the

mouth was eating them, then he started punching the walls around the doorway to try and save everyone.” The guy nodded in drunken appreciation. “It’s really quite noble.”

“Yeah,” I grinded my teeth in worry and frustration, “he’s a regular fucking Mother Teresa.” I had to find someone I could trust to look after Matt while we took care of Corey and his friends. I started to lose it when I finally saw Jessica talking to some guy on the other side of the room.

“Jess!” I frantically ran over to her like the victim in a horror movie. “Jess you gotta help me, Matt just took some acid, so I need someone to look after him.” I looked at her pleadingly. Jessica nodded her head.

“Okay.” We walked over to Matt and the guy on the couch helped us get him onto another couch. I started to wonder why Mia had so many couches, but there was way too much to worry about at the moment. When we finally got him on the couch I thought I was home free to go deal with Corey and his friends, but that’s when Jessica started in on me. I got up to go find Andrew when Jessica shot me a world of frustration, and I really didn’t need that right now.

“I’m not doing this for you; I’m doing this for Matt.” Jessica gave me a look nasty enough to break a mirror. Jessica and I almost dated a while back, but she instead hooked up with my friend Josh; they lasted for about a week before she broke up with him. Jessica and I were still friends, but there was definitely some tension between us; the kind of tension you could cut with a knife it was so thick.

“Really, you don’t have to do this.” I was looking at the ground; I couldn’t even look at her.

“Me? What about you?” She was desperate for anything that would make me wrong here and make her right.

“Hah,” I laughed, “What about me?” I tensed up. I knew she was about to piss me off.

“You’re jealous, come on,” she looked at me like she was God’s gift to men. I’ve never seen anyone look so conceited before.

“I’m jealous? Of what reason do I have to be jealous?” I couldn’t stop the huge grin on my face, and I could barely keep from laughing. This was just getting too ridiculous.

“Um, because I chose Josh instead of you, and now you’re miserable and you want me to feel like crap because you do.” She wasn’t asking me, she was *telling* me how *I* felt.

“Sure Jess, that’s it, that’s why I wanted you to look after Matt. Not because I’m worried sick about the guy but because I want to ruin your night. Thanks for making this about you.” I was about to walk off but I stopped and closed my eyes for a few seconds before taking a deep breath. “Just, please, look after him.” Jessica nodded and I motioned to Danny and the rest of the guys. “Come on, let’s go find Andrew.” Ohio was talking to our friend Jake when he looked over at me.

“Jake says he saw Corey go into the garage, and he thinks Andrew might be in there too.” Ohio had a look of urgency on his face. I’m sure I reflected that look.

“Fuck.” I looked at the door to the garage from the house; it was wide open, but you couldn’t hear anything from inside there because of the music in the house. “Let’s go.”

We ran into the garage as quickly and casually as we could possibly manage. It was pretty crowded and I couldn't help but notice how much nicer and more spacious this garage was than my apartment. Is that sad? My train of thought started to trail off on my housing options when I saw Corey and noticed something that screwed up our chance of keeping Andrew alive at this party.

"There's twelve of them," I ran my hand down my head and across the back of my neck. "There's fucking twelve of them." Andrew had told Chris that there were eight of them and that was something we could easily handle with JD and Chris backing us. But twelve of them was a completely different story.

"There's Steven," Danny pointed to a corner of the garage. It was so damn crowded that he was kinda out of sight, but there in the back corner of the garage was Steven's head poking out of the swarm of drunk people, almost like the crowd was giving birth to him. I figured I was just high and didn't announce this abstract observation.

We made our way over to Steven, who was taking swigs off a bottle of cheap brandy.

"Did you see Corey?" Steven pointed in Corey's general direction. "There's like ten of them."

"There's twelve," I scanned the room again. "You see those two guys over there?" I pointed off to the side of the garage to two guys that were relatively bigger than anyone Corey had right next to him. "The two that are trying to play it off like they didn't show up here with Corey, see them? Those are his older brothers."

"Really?" Steven squinted across the room, looking back and forth between Corey and his brothers trying to find a resemblance.

“Yeah.” I knew who Corey’s brothers were because they often showed up with him when he felt like he might actually be matched in numbers. The bastards never liked to fight fair. “That’s why we need to find Andrew,” I looked around. “Have you seen him?”

“Sure,” Steven said as he threw back another shot of brandy. “He’s hiding right behind me.”

As absurd as it sounded, I looked and sure enough there was Andrew, standing right behind Steven with the remains of what was a six pack of blue moon beer. All that was left was half a beer in Andrew’s hand and five empty bottles on the ground next to him. I laughed. I didn’t even notice him back there this whole time. Hiding Andrew behind the tallest guy at the party. Not a bad play.

“Steven you tall son of a gun,” I slapped Steven on the shoulder. “Good work.”

“So what do we do now?” Andrew looked nervous, and he damn well should be.

“We get you the hell out of here.” I glanced at Corey and his friends; they weren’t looking anywhere near us. “There’s way too many of them. We can’t fight them. We need to get you safely to an exit so you can get out of here without them ever seeing you.”

Corey’s friends were watching the door back into the house. They probably figured that since they hadn’t seen Andrew around that he wasn’t here yet and was about to walk through that door any minute. This led us to go through the side door out to the back yard. Since the garage was so big we couldn’t really find the side door until a girl holding a bottle of plastic vodka fought her way to it and proceeded to throw up all over

the ground right outside the door. She wiped off her mouth, closed the door and went back to dancing in the garage. Gross.

I threw open the door and started to push Andrew through first to get him out of sight but the poor bastard slipped on the girl's puke right outside the garage. It threw him off balance and his half-empty (or half-full for all you optimists out there) bottle of beer flew out of his hand and shattered on the ground. The rest of us were pretty cautious walking across the slippery and vodka-scented spot of ground.

The night was pretty nice; cool air welcomed us as we stepped out of the humid and sweaty surroundings of the garage. The stars were bright and the dim lights in Mia's backyard set a pretty good atmosphere. It was a very calming environment, minus the six or seven drunk girls who were puking their guts out around the yard.

"There's the back gate," Ohio pointed to a wooden gate in the fence that led to Mia's front yard. You could spot it from a distance because it was surrounded by the bright glow of lit cigarettes.

We walked hastily towards it. As we got closer we started to see that there were three people smoking cigarettes by the gate. They looked kinda young, too young to be smoking cigarettes anyways. I reached out my hand. I touched the gate latch. This was it. We were going to get Andrew out of here to his car and then we were free to go enjoy the party. That's when I saw five identical cars pull up right in front of Mia's house. Five identical cars painted black and white and decorated with little lights on top. Well isn't that a familiar sight.

I took my hand off the gate latch and ducked behind the fence. "Cops." All I had to do was say it and everyone knew what to do. Everyone with me ducked down. Two

of the three kids smoking cigarettes ran to the side door to warn everyone in the garage. One of them slipped in the puke. It was kinda funny but the moment was very pressing so we did our best not to laugh. The other one managed to get inside and get them to turn the music off. It got pretty silent. We waited for about fifteen minutes and not one cop got out of their car.

“What the hell are they doing?” Steven said, referring to the cops. He sounded pretty irritated; crouching like we were was like the complete opposite of a comfortable way to spend fifteen minutes, especially if you’re as tall as Steven.

“They’re waiting,” Danny sipped on his whiskey. He was down to about a fifth of the bottle. “It got quiet; that must have thrown them off. They’re probably waiting for someone to walk outside to leave so they can catch them drunk and then have reason to break up the party.” That sounded like a good guess.

I looked through the slits in between the boards of the fence. Those cops weren’t going anywhere, not for a while. “It’s okay,” I tried to process my thoughts properly. The setbacks in our situation were starting to wear on me. “All we have to do is stay out here for a while; Corey and his friends won’t look for Andrew out here, and even if they did they wouldn’t jump him because that would catch the attention of the cops.” It wasn’t exactly an exciting plan, but it made sense and it was safe. “So it looks like we’ve got a wait ahead of us.”

Steven coughed. “Need something to pass the time?” He was brandishing the bottle of brandy.

We weren’t leaving anytime soon. Fuck it. I grabbed the bottle of brandy and took a generous gulp that burned into my taste buds and stuck with me all the way down.



It tasted lousy but I couldn't beat the relaxing warmth of it. Steven passed the bottle around, and even the kid smoking cigarettes took a sip. It did wonders for JD and Chris, all this waiting around was kind of tough with them since they were on ecstasy and all, and while I doubt they could actually feel the effects of the alcohol, the motion was calming to them. I felt around in my pockets for a blunt I was saving for the end of the night, but I remembered I gave it to Matt to make sure it didn't get smoked until the night was over. Great.

“Hey kid,” I nodded at the kid smoking cigarettes. “Mind if I get a cigarette?”

He handed me one and I thanked him before I lit it and took the first drag. I inhaled, taking an especially long drag of the cigarette. It was a menthol. Damn I hate menthols, but I didn't have any right to complain about a cigarette I had just gotten for free. I took another drag, shutting out the sickeningly strong minty taste and welcoming the relaxing effects of nicotine into my system. Truthfully I hated nicotine, but damn did it love me.

There wasn't really anything to do and everyone was pretty quiet so I started to think about things. We were at this huge party that was supposed to be the best of the year but we ended up at a spot with cops on one side, Corey on the other, and no girls. The thing that was getting to me was that I couldn't shake this feeling that even if we were inside the party and didn't have any of the drama surrounding Andrew that it still wouldn't be that great. I was trying desperately to think of some meaning to this, to my life, to what we do. I was coming up blank.

The side door to the garage flew open and we all turned our attention to it. A guy stumbled out of the garage and became victim number three to the puke surrounding the

doorway as he slipped and lost all the intoxicating contents of his red plastic cup. I knew the guy. He was this kid named Johnny and he looked pretty drunk. He threw his cup on the ground and ran over to where we were standing.

“Are those fuckin cops still there?!” He started to yell in all his drunkness but he was stumbling so much that he shut his mouth for a second and focused on standing. Luckily he was short enough to be fully concealed by the fence so the cops didn’t see him. “I’ll fuckin, you know what I’ll do.” he was mixing up his words, trying desperately to elude the effects of the alcohol long enough to finish a sentence. “I’ll fucking beat the shit out of those cops!” he swung a fist through the air in an attempt to make us believe that he was tough enough to do it, but all it did was make us believe just how drunk he really was.

“No way,” Danny grinned. “Go ahead,” Danny motioned to the gate latch. “Come on Johnny, you won’t do it,” taunted Danny. We all joined in.

“Yeah, Johnny,” we echoed. “You won’t do it.” Maybe we shouldn’t be taunting him, but we had been out here so long that we were kind of bored and it was funny. Besides, he wasn’t actually going to do anything.

“I’ll do it!” Johnny was drunk enough to let us rile him up. It just made us taunt him more. “I’ll fucking do it!”

Johnny’s right hand scraped against the ground until he got a grip on something and he formed a fist around it. He cocked his arm back and paused just long enough for us to notice a nice big rock residing in his right hand.

*Oh God.* My jaw dropped. We all fell silent. There’s no way he was going to do it. Then again, I should never underestimate what a drunk person is prepared to do. His

arm sprung forward, his grip around the rock released. I swear we could all see it in perfect slow motion. With the physical limitations of Johnny's size, with the amount of alcohol that should throw his aim off, the laws of physics just didn't seem to apply in this case. In all our lousy luck the rock arched and fell beautifully onto the roof of one of the cop cars, giving out a loud and terror-inducing clank. Well isn't that nice.

Spotlights buzzed on and shone directly on the gate we were crouched behind.

"Shit!" The kid that gave me a cigarette cursed and sprinted towards the side door to the garage. I looked at everyone and then at the beams of light pouring in between the boards of the fences.

"Get inside!" I pointed to the garage.

"Wait," Andrew hesitated. "No, wait, what about Corey?!"

"Doesn't matter, we have to get out of sight," I could hear the slams of car doors. The cops were out of their cars. "We have to get out of sight now."

We ran to the garage; Johnny made it there first but he slipped on the puke again and landed square on his face. JD was just behind him and threw the door open. We piled into the garage as fast as we could. Johnny crawled in after us and shut the door. He even managed to come up with the good idea of locking it right after.

I was enjoying a sigh of relief when I noticed Corey noticing us. "Guys..." I nodded my head towards Corey and his friends and everyone understood. "This is it right here."

After all the waiting, after all the hiding, after all we sacrificed tonight. This is how it was going to end. We were outnumbered, and while we could probably last it at first, these guys fought dirty and it would probably end with us getting the shit kicked out

of us right when the cops would burst into the garage. I looked at everyone: Danny, Ohio, Steven, Chris, JD; they were all here because we weren't going to walk away from each other. Even if it meant fighting a fight that we'd probably lose.

Corey and his friends were walking towards us now. They put on their best "I'm tough" faces and tried to play it off like they'd be just as tough if they didn't have eleven of their friends there to jump in on every fight one of them gets into. Corey motioned to his older brothers who were still off to the side. They walked through the crowd to join up with Corey and his friends when somebody ran into them and spilled a drink all over them. Corey's brothers exploded.

"Hey what the FUCK?!" One of the brothers shouted as he shoved the guy and sent him flying through the crowd. The guy knocked a few people over when he got pushed but he was still standing. He was pretty big actually. Much bigger than Corey's brothers. So big in fact that he could have taken on either one of them in a one-on-one fight no problem. You know what that means. We could all see it coming a mile away.

Just as the guy was about to throw a swing at one of the brothers' faces, Corey and his friends came up behind him and started taking blows at the back of his head. He turned around to fight them but as soon as he did Corey's brothers took up the task of throwing punches at his back. It was a lost cause and the guy tried desperately to catch his footing but he was taking punches from all sides. He tried to run but they had him surrounded and every time he moved the circle of punches moved with him. Through all the cheap shots that were being thrown, someone finally threw a right hook that was good enough to send the guy to the ground. Corey and his friends stepped forward, making their circle around their victim even tighter and proceeded to kick him while he was on

the ground. As pathetic and dirty as it was to jump a guy like that, these bastards had it down to an almost beautiful rhythm. While the guy on the ground curled up into a ball and covered his head with his arms, Corey and his friends seemed to kick him in perfect timing, one after another so that there was never a moment that this guy didn't have a foot hitting his body. It should've been on Animal Planet or something.

One thing was for sure, Corey and his friends definitely didn't care about Andrew anymore. While we were off the hook, I still felt bad for the guy that was getting jumped.

"Should we help him?" I asked Danny. I mean we were planning on fighting them anyways.

"Nah," Danny shook his head. "This is just karma," he gulped down the last of his whiskey and tossed the plastic bottle he had been carrying it in. "That's the guy that stole my video camera three months ago."

I looked closer. *Well I'll be damned*, I thought. So it was.

Mia came through the door that led to the house and slammed her fist against the garage door opener. She was being followed by some officers of the law.

"EVERYONE GET THE FUCK OUT!" she screamed. The fight stopped and everyone stared into the unsettling blinding flashes of police flashlights. People scattered and everyone started leaving through the open garage, everyone except me. I told the others to go and made my way upstream through the current of people flowing against me. As I shoved my way through the crowd I couldn't help but notice the odors of various different liquors pouring out through the breath of the oncoming crowd. When I finally made it to the door that led into the house I smiled at Mia.

“Great party Mia, it was fun,” I said as I pushed myself past her and the cops. She didn’t seem too thrilled by the compliment, but I liked to think that it was because cops had just broken up her party.

Inside the house it was pretty frantic. People were pouring out the doors and there were drunk stragglers left behind. It looked like zombies had just taken over and these panicked people were trying to sober up their loved ones enough to get them out of here. I got to the couch where Jessica was sitting with Matt. She was stroking his hair and keeping him calm when she saw me.

“There you are!” She jumped up. “The cops got here and you didn’t come in to get Matt, I started to get worried. I thought something happened to you at the fight.” Jessica scanned me over like a doctor, until she found no bruises on me, and she nodded her head, “So you guys won I guess?”

I shrugged. “It’s a long story.”

Jessica looked worried.

“I’m fine, someone else ended up fighting Corey and his friends.”

She smiled. “Good! I guess.” She punched me in the arm. Then we laughed. Then we hugged. She buried her face in my chest so her voice was muffled.

“Ikdfmskjdf,” she said. She sounded sincere; whatever the hell it was she was saying.

“What’s that? I can’t understand a damn thing you’re saying,” I said with a grin.

She lifted her face up. “I said I’m glad you’re okay.” She looked at me and she smiled. She really was beautiful.

I motioned to Matt. “How’s he doing?”

“Good,” she looked at him. “He calmed down a lot, started talking about how great the wall facing the couch is.” Matt was staring unblinkingly at the wall across from the couch. There was a slight smile on his face. “Apparently he’s found a lot of meaning in that wall.”

Jessica helped me get Matt off the couch and we guided him through the front door past some unsuspecting cops who probably just thought Matt was drunk. We got him to my car where Danny, Ohio, and Steven were already waiting for us. They put him inside and then got in themselves.

I turned to Jessica, who had just sacrificed her entire night to look after my friend. “Thanks for taking care of him,” I motioned towards Matt. “I really appreciate it; I know it kind of ruined your time at the party.”

Jessica put her hand on my chest and said, “Don’t worry about it” and she hugged me again.

“I’ll tell you what,” she said, “Since I spent the whole time looking after your friend I didn’t get a chance to open my vodka.” She held up a mini bottle of vodka she had in her purse. “Why don’t I meet you back at your place and you can make me a drink.” She smiled. “You know,” she said as she nudged my shoulder, “make it up to me.”

I smiled too. “See you there.”

We drove off and acid-induced Matt commented about how beautiful the colors of the police lights looked. When we got far enough away from the cops, we finally got Matt to focus enough to find that blunt I had given him earlier. Danny sparked it up and I

rolled the windows down to let the cool night air pour in. As the blunt got passed to me I took the time to appreciate the smoke that poured out of the end of it, curling around my fingertips until it dissipated out the windows. I had to appreciate it out of my peripheral vision on account of the fact that I was driving and all of course, but that didn't affect how the calming grace of the smoke looked to me. I put the blunt to my lips and inhaled, burning down the paper at the other end as the cherry glowed. As I exhaled I thought about the night. I still had that thought that the events of tonight ultimately meant nothing; that maybe there wasn't enough meaning in my life. I managed to shake off the negative feelings. After all, if Matt found meaning in a wall, I could find meaning in the night, right? My thoughts turned to sweet Jessica and I took another hit of the blunt, letting the THC calm my weary uncertainties. It was some pretty strong stuff and surprisingly I already felt high after only two hits. I passed the blunt to Ohio and I smiled. It was the end of the night and here I was with my best friends. Maybe there was enough meaning in that.